CURE EPILEPSY TAKING FLIGHT AWARD

Promoting the Careers of Early-Career Investigators

CURE Epilepsy's investigator-initiated grant programs seek to push the envelope and accelerate promising research leading to disease-modifying breakthroughs for people living with epilepsy. We prioritize highly innovative, risky, paradigm-shifting projects that address our mission to cure epilepsy, affirming our core belief that the only acceptable final goal is "no seizures, no side effects."

CURE Epilepsy's mission is to fund breakthrough research that will transform the lives of people with epilepsy as we lead the search for a cure.

CURE Epilepsy encourages applications from groups underrepresented in the biomedical, clinical, behavioral, and social sciences. These groups include individuals with disabilities, veterans, persons from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups and gender diverse groups, women in biomedical-related disciplines, or any legally protected characteristic.

U.S. citizenship is not required. Researchers outside the U.S. are also encouraged to apply.

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CURE Epilepsy seeks to promote the careers of early-career investigators to allow them to develop an independent research focus. Researchers may propose basic or clinical studies, but this award mechanism is not intended to support clinical trials. Research that involves collaboration and a multidisciplinary approach is desirable. We encourage studies that will provide new directions for epilepsy therapy, prevention, and, ultimately, a cure and that will allow applicants to collect the data necessary to support a grant application to the National Institutes of Health or a similar granting agency. **Requests may be made for up to $125,000 for 18 months.**

PRIORITY AREAS

CURE Epilepsy's priority research areas focus on those that have the potential to truly transform and save lives. Prevention, disease modification, and elimination are critical goals and consistent with our mission.

- Transformative research to enhance our understanding of the cellular, molecular, genetic, and systems-level mechanisms that lead to any of the epilepsies, facilitating the continued investigation of disease-modifying or preventative strategies.
- Innovative approaches that can prevent, modify, and/or arrest the development of acquired epilepsy. Examples include epilepsy that develops after stroke, tumor, traumatic brain injury or infection, including febrile infection-related epilepsy syndrome (FIRES) as well as new-onset refractory status-epilepticus (NORSE).
- Research that will inform the development of novel therapies to prevent onset or halt the progression of severe pediatric epilepsies.
- Research focused on new, effective treatments for the > thirty percent of the epilepsy population who are pharmacoresistant.
- Novel research that furthers our understanding of the causes and ultimate elimination of SUDEP.
- Translational, clinical, and clinically informed basic research that will facilitate understanding of the cellular-, molecular-, and systems-level mechanisms that underlie the relationships between sleep and epilepsy.

Based on CURE Epilepsy's current research objectives, lower priority will be given for research in the following areas:

- Research that focuses solely on a comorbid condition without also seeking to understand the accompanying epilepsy.
- Research that focuses solely on improving localization of the epileptic seizure focus.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must generally fall into one of the following categories to be eligible for the *Taking Flight* Award:

- A postdoctoral fellow with a PhD, PsyD, PharmD, or equivalent and a minimum of two years postdoctoral experience at the time of LOI submission and who has not yet obtained significant, independent funding ($125,000 or more). Applicants must submit a letter of support from their direct supervisor/mentor at the full proposal stage. For applicants with less than three years of post-doctoral experience, this letter must include a statement from the mentor, clearly articulating a plan to guide the applicant through the project, helping them develop an independent research focus, and encouraging them to think independently and strategically.
- A researcher with an appointment as an Instructor or Research Assistant Professor who has yet to obtain significant, independent funding ($125,000 or more) and has an on-site mentor committed to advising the applicant.
- A faculty member at the assistant professor level who is within one year of having been appointed at the time of LOI submission and who has yet to obtain significant, independent funding ($125,000 or more).
- A clinician-researcher who is within two years of their faculty appointment at the time of LOI submission and who has yet to obtain significant, independent funding ($125,000 or more).
- A clinical fellow who is pursuing a residency in the following areas: neurology, neurosurgery or neurocritical care, and considering an epilepsy-focused fellowship and who has yet to obtain significant, independent funding ($125,000 or more).

Researchers who serve on CURE Epilepsy's Scientific Advisory Council are ineligible to apply for or sponsor a grant for the duration of their term.

International applicants are welcome. All materials must be submitted in English.

Researchers may contact us with questions regarding eligibility at Research@CUREepilepsy.org or 312-255-1801, Extension 3.

FUNDING CYCLE DETAILS

ACTIVITY	KEY DATES
Open Call for Letters of Intent	**Wednesday, November 25, 2026**
Letter of Intent Deadline	**Wednesday, January 6, 2027, 9pm ET**
Full Proposal Invitations	**Thursday, February 18, 2027**
Full Proposal Deadline	**Monday, March 22, 2027, 9pm ET**
Anticipated Award Notification	**End of July 2027**
Anticipated Project Start Date	**Friday, October 1, 2027**

BUDGET INFORMATION

Requests may be made for up to $125,000 for 18 months. Funding requests may include salary support for the Principal Investigator (PI), technical staff, supplies necessary to perform the work, animal costs, publication fees, and travel to an epilepsy-related conference if the PI is presenting his/her CURE Epilepsy-funded research. Funds are not to be used to purchase equipment. **Indirect costs are not supported.** Funds cannot be used to cover institutional expenses such as network charges, computer maintenance, services, insurance dues, or other miscellaneous expenses not directly related to performing the project.

LETTER OF INTENT INSTRUCTIONS

All applicants must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI). The LOI should clearly and succinctly outline the hypothesis to be tested, the specific aims, and provide a brief description of the research plan according to the guidelines in this announcement.

Letter of Intent Instructions:

Below are instructions for the required **scientific summary**, **future directions,** and **award relevance** sections, which together can be no longer than two pages in length. **LOIs exceeding two pages of text will not be reviewed.**

1) **Scientific Summary:** Clearly and succinctly outline the hypothesis and specific aims and provide a brief description of how the proposed research plan aligns with CURE Epilepsy's mission and with CURE Epilepsy's desire to push epilepsy research forward by leaps rather than by incremental steps. Preliminary data is not required but encouraged (one-page maximum).

2) **Future Directions:** Describe what next steps will be taken once the goals of your proposed project have been achieved (one-half page maximum, including spaces).

3) **Award Relevance**: Explain how this avenue of research will lead to a path of independent epilepsy research. Please make sure to name your mentor(s) somewhere in this section (one-half page maximum, this includes spaces).

A few points to note:

- It is important to keep in mind that a key factor that reviewers consider when assessing applications is feasibility. Lower scores will be given to proposals that are not realistically achievable within an 18-month timeframe. The "Future

Directions" section enables you to explain how your research will progress once the goals of your proposed project have been achieved.

- Graphs and charts do not count towards the two-page text description of your project.
- References are not required at the LOI phase. However, if you decide to include references, they do not count towards the page limitation.

FORMATTING GUIDELINES

ITEM	DETAILS
Font	Use an Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype or Georgia typeface, a black font color, and a font size of 12 points or larger.
Figures, Tables, and Graphs	You may use a smaller type size, but it must be in a black font color, readily legible, and follow the font typeface requirement. Color can be used in figures, but all text must be in black font.
Spacing	Single-spaced between lines of text, no more than five lines of type within a vertical inch. Margins: Minimum of 0.5-inch top, bottom, right and 1-inch left.

LETTER OF INTENT PROPOSALCENTRAL INSTRUCTIONS

LOIs must be submitted through ProposalCentral (https://proposalcentral.altum.com). To begin an application, applicants will need to create a professional profile, if one does not already exist.

Instructions for each section of the application in ProposalCentral:

1) **Title Page:** Enter the proposal title (maximum 150 characters, including spaces).

2) **Download Templates and Instructions:** Find a copy of the guidelines for your reference.

3) **Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal:** Follow the instructions if you want to grant access to any other individuals.

4) **Applicant/PI:** This section should auto-populate from the applicant's professional profile. Double-check that the information is complete and correct. If it is not, click "Edit Professional Profile" to update the information. Indicate whether you are a postdoctoral fellow, a clinical fellow, or a new faculty member.

5) **Institution and Contacts:** Information should auto-populate from the applicant's profile.

6) **Keywords:** Add at least three keywords that best describe the specific focus of your research proposal.

7) **Current and Pending Support:** List all current and pending support for you and any co- investigators. Pending support includes grants that have been submitted but for which decisions have not yet been communicated. Current and pending support is required for the PI and co-PI but is not required for collaborators.

8) **Attach LOI and Biosketch:** Once the LOI is finalized, attach it by uploading the PDF into this section of ProposalCentral. You should also upload your biosketch into Section 8 of the application. While your biosketch can be in NIH format, please note that this formatting is not required.

Optional

- Applicants are encouraged to provide statements regarding their commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in their research environment (100 words or less).
- Applicants may include within their biosketch a one-half page section describing any life events or circumstances that contributed to delays or gaps in their career trajectory. This may include information that may not otherwise be apparent to reviewers and can help provide context as they

evaluate your professional trajectory and achievements. Examples include but are not limited to; being a member of a community underrepresented in biomedical research, having experienced a life event that impacted career trajectory (such as parenthood, family, or medical leave), COVID-19 pandemic-related effects, having a learning or other disability, coming from a low-income family, and being the first in your family to go to college.

9) **Validate:** The system will check for required components that have not been completed. Applicants will not be able to submit until all required components are completed.

10) **Submit:** Click "Submit" after your application has been successfully validated.

FULL PROPOSAL NARRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS (10-PAGE LIMIT*)

Following review of LOIs, select applicants will be invited to submit full proposals and will be asked for the following:

Main Body of Proposal: Describe the project background, hypothesis, and specific aims of the research, preliminary data, research plan detailing experimental design and methods, expected outcomes, potential pitfalls, and interpretation(s) of outcomes of the research. CURE Epilepsy strongly encourages the use of Common Data Elements (CDEs) in your research. Pre-clinical CDEs increase rigor, data standardization, and transparency across research studies. *Guidance for Integration in Grant Proposals:* Researchers should include in their proposal, where applicable, the procedure specific CDEs that will be used in their pre-clinical studies. An example of the language is suggested below:

"Data collection for all *in vivo* experiments was captured using Case Report Forms (CRFs) specific to each procedure. CDEs that will be used are listed and recorded as a supplemental file". Files can be uploaded in any appropriate format to the proposal narrative and other attachments section as explained

below. Examples of data standardization tools can be found here for the relevant pre-clinical CDEs. https://cureepilepsy.org/research-resources/.

Mission: Include one paragraph detailing how the proposed research aligns with CURE Epilepsy's mission.

Award Relevance: Include one paragraph describing how this avenue of research will lead to a path of independent epilepsy research.

References: Please list all literature cited within the proposal. References do not count toward the page limit.

It is important to keep in mind that a key factor that reviewers consider when assessing applications is feasibility. Lower scores will be given to proposals that are not realistically achievable within an 18-month timeframe. The "Future Directions" section enables you to explain how your research will progress once the goals of your proposed project have been achieved.

Applications are evaluated for innovation, feasibility, scientific merit, relevance to grant mechanism, relevance to CURE Epilepsy's mission, and potential to be transformative.

*The 10-page limit of the Proposal Narrative is inclusive of any figures, tables, graphs, photographs, diagrams, chemical structures, pictures, pictorials, cartoons, and other relevant information needed to judge the proposal.

FORMATTING GUIDELINES

ITEM	DETAILS
Font	Use an Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype or Georgia typeface, a black font color, and a font size of 12 points or larger.
Figures, Tables, and Graphs	You may use a smaller type size, but it must be in a black font color, readily legible, and follow the font typeface requirement. Color can be used in figures,

	but all text must be in black font.
Spacing	Single-spaced between lines of text, no more than five lines of type within a vertical inch. Margins: Minimum of 0.5-inch top, bottom, right and 1-inch left.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

All individuals invited to submit full applications will be required to submit two letters of support: one letter of support from their direct supervisor/mentor and one letter of support from another senior investigator/clinician familiar with the individual's expertise, experience, and potential to develop an independent avenue of research. For new faculty, Department Chairs can provide letters of support since they are the direct supervisors of their faculty.

FULL PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROPOSALCENTRAL

Full proposals must be submitted through ProposalCentral (https://proposalcentral.altum.com).

To access your application, log in to ProposalCentral and go to the Manage Proposals tab. Select "edit" next to the approved LOI to start the full proposal application. Below are instructions for each section of the online application:

1) **Title Page:** Enter the proposal title (maximum 150 characters, including spaces).

2) **Download Templates and Instructions:** You may access a copy of the award guidelines, ORCID ID instructions and a biosketch template (if you don't already have one complete). Note – you may use NIH biosketch format if preferred over the template provided.

3) **Enable Other Users to Access this Proposal:** Use this optional section to grant access to co- investigators or collaborators so they may review or enter information into the application.

4) **Applicant/PI:** This section should auto-populate from your professional profile. Double-check that the information is complete and correct. If it is not, click "Edit Professional Profile" to update the information. Indicate whether you are a senior postdoctoral fellow, clinical fellow, or new faculty member. CURE Epilepsy now requires an ORCID ID with all full proposal submissions. If your ORCID ID is not already provided on this page, enter an ORCID identifier in your Professional Profile by clicking "Edit Professional Profile". Detailed instructions may be accessed in Section 2 of the online application – Download Templates and Instructions.

5) **Institution and Contacts:** Information should auto-populate from your profile.

6) **Letters of Reference:** You are required to submit two letters of support. One letter must come from the direct supervisor/mentor. For applicants with less than three years of post-doctoral experience, this must include a statement from the mentor, clearly articulating a plan to mentor and guide the applicant through the project, helping them develop an independent research focus, and encouraging them to think independently and strategically. The second letter should come from another senior investigator/clinician familiar with your expertise and experience.

7) **Abstract:** Answer the questions in each box according to the instructions below:

   a. **Lay Summary**: The lay summary will be reviewed by a person with lived experience of epilepsy. Please take special care to describe the proposed work and its potential to contribute to the development of a transformative therapy in language appropriate for a non-scientific audience. Your summary MUST include each of the following:

      i. **Background and Rationale**.
      ii. **Goals**: include any overarching or long-term goals.
      iii. **Methods**: briefly explain how the project will be performed avoiding

excessive technical detail.

iv. **Deliverables**: explain what output is expected at the successful completion of the project.

v. **Potential Impact**: briefly explain how the work, if successful, will improve the lives of those with or at risk for epilepsy. In this section, you may also explain the next steps in your research plan once the goals of your proposed project have been achieved.

b. **Scientific Summary**: Please provide a brief (250 word) scientific abstract for your project.

8) **Budget Period Detail:** Provide a detailed budget. The budget maximum for this program is $125,000 for direct costs for 18 months. Include an itemized list of how funds will be used, e.g., materials, animals, salary, fringe benefits, disposables, maintenance, travel*. *Funds are not to be used to purchase equipment*. **Please note that indirect costs and institutional overhead are not provided.** Funds cannot be used to cover institutional expenses such as network charges, computer maintenance, services, insurance dues, or other miscellaneous expenses not directly related to performing the project. All expenses must be converted to U.S. dollars (USD).

*Note that there is a travel cap of $1,500 USD for international applicants and $1,000 USD for U.S. applicants per year, which can be budgeted for a maximum of two investigators. If awarded, CURE Epilepsy encourages grantees to attend the annual American Epilepsy Society meeting. Additional funds outside the grant award will not be given to attend this event.

9) **Budget Summary and Justification:** Review the summarized budget to make sure that details have been entered correctly. Provide budget justification statement. The budget justification should clearly detail how and where the funds will be used and why these expenditures are critical to the success of the proposed research.

10) **Current and Pending Support:** Provide all current and pending support for key personnel. Please indicate if there is any overlap with the proposed work.

11) **Organization Assurances:** Answer the questions regarding the intended use of human subjects, animals, recombinant DNA, and the possession of a Schedule 1 license, if appropriate for the research proposal.

12) **Proposal Narrative and Other Attachments:** Upload the following documents:
    a. Proposal Narrative.
    b. Description of facilities available at the PI's institution.
    c. Biosketch for PI. You may use NIH biosketch format if preferred over the template provided.

    Optional
    - Applicants are encouraged to provide statements regarding their commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in their research environment (100 words or less).
    - Applicants may include within their biosketch a one-half page section describing any life events or circumstances that contributed to delays or gaps in their career trajectory. This may include information that may not otherwise be apparent to reviewers and can help provide context as they evaluate your professional trajectory and achievements. Examples include but are not limited to; being a member of a community underrepresented in biomedical research, having experienced a life event that impacted career trajectory (such as parenthood, family, or medical leave), COVID-19 pandemic-related effects, having a learning or other disability, coming from a low-income family, and being the first in your family to go to college.

    d. Signed signature pages: Upload signed signature pages which are generated in Section 15 of the application.

13) **Validate:** The system will check for required components that have not been completed. You will not be able to submit until all required components are completed.

14) **Signature Page(s):** Click "Print Signature Page" to obtain a PDF of the document that needs to be signed by you (the submitting PI) and an institutional representative. After signatures have been collected, scan the signature page and upload to Section 12.

15) **Submit:** Please **make sure to click "Submit"** once your application has been validated by the system.

NOTE: CURE Epilepsy may occasionally share your full proposal with prospective donors or other advocacy groups who may be interested in co-funding the award. A non-disclosure agreement will be signed by each person who is given access to the full proposal.

Inquiries: Questions regarding these guidelines are welcome and should be directed to the Research Team at Research@CUREepilepsy.org or 312-255-1801, Extension 3.

APPLICANT FAQS

Answers to a series of frequently asked questions may be found below. If, after reviewing, additional clarification is needed, please reach out to the Research Team at Research@CUREepilepsy.org.

Are international applicants eligible to apply?

Yes, international applicants are eligible to apply for CURE Epilepsy grants. All application materials must be submitted in English and should be written with a clear hypothesis and specific aims as is consistent with the U.S. grant-making system.

Are multiple researchers from the same institution allowed to apply for the same grant?

Yes. There is no limit to the number of researchers from the same institution who can apply for the same grant.

I'm interested in submitting a LOI for an open CURE Epilepsy award with a scientist who is currently funded by CURE Epilepsy. Is this allowed?
Yes, you can apply for an open award with a Co-PI currently funded by CURE Epilepsy.

I was invited to submit a full application last year but was not awarded funding. I have addressed the concerns voiced in the reviews of my original application and would like to reapply. Can I reapply, and if so, what is the process?
Yes, we encourage you to reapply. However, you must go through CURE Epilepsy's standard application process. The first step is to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI).

I received a CURE Epilepsy grant in the past. May I apply again?
Yes. You are welcome to apply for a grant as a current/former CURE Epilepsy grantee.

May I apply for an award if I am an active reviewer for CURE Epilepsy?
Yes. If you are an active reviewer, you can still apply for an award. We will ensure that you are not assigned to applications in the award category for which you applied.

May I submit more than one application in the same cycle or to different award mechanisms, if running concurrently?
Yes, if the two applications have completely different hypotheses and specific aims.

Does CURE Epilepsy only fund academic laboratories?
Cure Epilepsy funds research from academic and non-academic laboratories. We fund researchers working at universities, small companies, and non-profit research institutions.

If I am submitting alongside another researcher, do we both need to apply?
CURE Epilepsy welcomes collaborative proposals with more than one principal investigator. However, one application must be submitted on behalf of the collaboration, under one PI's account in ProposalCentral.

May multidisciplinary funding be split between two institutions?

Yes, funding can be split among multiple institutions. However, CURE Epilepsy will only contract with the primary institution, which will be responsible for negotiating subcontracts with the institutions of any co-PIs/collaborators involved with the project. CURE Epilepsy requires detailed budgets outlining the allocation of funds to each institution.

Who can receive a salary from the grant?

Grant funds can be allocated to cover the salaries of investigators, postdocs, and graduate students in relation to the percentage of effort spent on the project, as well as research supplies and some travel expenses (see below). **Indirect costs are not covered.**

May grant funds be used for travel expenses?

Yes. There is a travel cap of $1,500 USD for international applicants and $1,000 USD for U.S. and Canadian applicants per year which can be budgeted for a maximum of two investigators (the PI and Co-PI). If awarded funds, CURE Epilepsy encourages all grantees to attend the annual American Epilepsy Society Meeting in December. Additional funds outside of the award will not be given to attend this event.

If I cannot submit by the deadline, may I request an extension?

No, CURE Epilepsy does not provide deadline extensions.